

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 BAGHDA 00202 310824Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 HA-05 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 VO-05 FBIE-00 INSE-00 CA-01
/080 W

-----098144 310841Z /14

P R 310635Z JAN 78
FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5589
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY RABAT

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BAGHDAD 0202

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CVIS SHUM, SREF, IZ
SUBJECT: IRAQI CHRISTIAN REFUGEES

REF: (A) 77 BAGHDAD 2162 (B) BAGHDAD 197 (C) BAGHDAD 195

1. IN A MEETING ON JAN 30 WITH CHIEF OF MFA'S FIRST INTERNATIONAL DIVISION, WISSAM ZAHAWI, HE PRESENTED A FIRM STATEMENT OF GOI CONCERN OVER THE FACT THAT 35 IRAQI CHRISTIANS HAD BEEN GRANTED TEMPORARY PERMISSION TO REMAIN IN THE US DURING CONSIDERATION OF THEIR REQUEST FOR REFUGEE STATUS. SUGGESTIONS THAT THEY HAD BEEN SUBJECT TO RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION WERE BOTH GROUNDLESS AND SLANDEROUS IN VIEW OF THE ACTUAL SITUATION, HE SAID, AND THE GOI WOULD CONSIDER IT AN INSULT IF THE US SHOULD DECIDE TO GRANT THE REQUEST, AN ACTION THAT IRAQ COULD NOT CONSIDER AS FRIENDLY.

2. HE ADDED THAT THE FACT THAT ROYAL AIR MOROC HAD TRANSPORTED THE PEOPLE TO NEW YORK RAISED SERIOUS QUESTIONS AS TO THE SPONTANEITY OF THE DEVELOPMENT, AND THE GOI IS
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 BAGHDA 00202 310824Z

HIGHLY SUSPICIOUS THAT THE ENTIRE EVENT HAD BEEN STAGED AS AN EFFORT TO EMBARRASS IRAQ. HE THEN ASKED IF THE ARTICLE IN THE PRESS ON THIS SUBJECT HAD BEEN NOTED (REF C) SINCE THIS REFLECTED THE CURRENT VIEWS OF HIS GOVERNMENT.

3. IT BECAME IMMEDIATELY APPARENT THAT ZAHAWI HAD NO

BACKGROUND WHATSOEVER ON THE QUESTION OF IRAQI REFUGEES. HE WAS EVIDENTLY UNAWARE THAT A NUMBER OF SMALLER GROUPS FRAUDENTLY CLAIMING RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION HAD RECENTLY BEEN DENIED ENTRY INTO THE US, OR THAT THE USG HAD TAKEN A NUMBER OF STEPS TO CONTROL THE ARRIVAL OF SUCH CLAIMANTS. SINCE THIS SEEMED TO BE THE BEST MEANS OF FLATLY REFUTING ANY ALLEGATIONS OF US COMPLICITY, I GAVE HIM A DETAILED BRIEFING ON THE BACKGROUND OF MEASURES TAKEN TO PREVENT EXACTLY THE SORT OF PROBLEM THAT HAD NOW DEVELOPED.

4. AFTER LISTENING VERY CAREFULLY AND ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THERE SEEMS TO BE A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF INFORMATION OF WHICH THE GOI WAS UNAWARE, ZAHAWI RETURNED TO THE THEME THAT IRAQ WOULD CONSIDER ITSELF INSULTED IF REFUGEE STATUS WERE ACCORDED TO ANYONE FROM IRAQ. HE WAS SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT A NUMBER OF OTHER COUNTRIES, INCLUDING EGYPT, ARE ALSO THE SOURCE OF INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING REFUGEE STATUS AS A RESULT OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION. IN REPLY TO HIS STATEMENT THAT A FAVORABLE DECISION IN THE CURRENT CASE WOULD RESULT IN BAD PUBLICITY FOR IRAQ, I POINTED OUT THAT THE REVERSE WAS ALSO PROBABLY TRUE SINCE THERE MIGHT THEN BE AN EXTENSIVE COURT CASE IN WHICH CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION TO THE SUBJECT WOULD BE GENERATED.

5. ZAHAWI UNDERLINED THE NECESSITY FOR CONVEYING HIS DEMARCHE TO THE DEPARTMENT IN ORDER THAT THE VIEWS OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 BAGHDA 00202 310824Z

IRAQI GOVERNMENT WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO THOSE MAKING THE FINAL DECISION. I AGREED TO DO SO AND MADE A BRIEF PRESENTATION ON AMERICAN JUDICIAL PRACTICES IN ORDER TO EXPLAIN THAT FOREIGN POLICY CONSIDERATIONS WOULD PROBABLY NOT PLAY A ROLE IN THE FINAL OUTCOME.

6. COMMENT: THE IRAQIS EVIDENTALLY VIEW THIS MATTER WITH CONSIDERABLE CONCERN. KNEE-JERK REACTION WHICH RESULTED IN PRESS ATTACK MAY NOW BE REGRETTED AS IRAQI GOVERNMENT LEARNS OF FULL DIMENSIONS OF PROBLEM. THEY MAY ALSO COME TO REALIZE THEIR ACTION WILL PROBABLY STRENGTHEN REQUESTS FOR ASYLUM SINCE NO ONE ACCUSED OF INVOLVEMENT WITH CIA COULD EVER BE EXPECTED TO RETURN TO IRAQ.

7. AS WASHINGTON IS AWARE, REF A, MOST OBSERVERS DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE GROUNDS FOR CLAIMS OF RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN IRAQ IN THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF CASES. EFFORTS TO CIRCUMVENT BOTH NORMAL VISA AND SEVENTH PREFERENCE PROCEDURES ARE CLEARLY ON THE UPSWING AS PREDICTED AND MAY RESULT IN ADDITIONAL IRRITANTS IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH IRA UNLESS CAREFULLY HANDLED.

8. IT WILL BE VERY HELPFUL IF THE DEPARTMENT
CAN INSURE WE ARE KEPT FULLY INFORMED ON DEVELOPMENTS
IN THIS CASE AS THEY OCCUR.
PECK

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CHRISTIANS, REFUGEES, POLITICAL ASYLUM, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BAGHDA00202
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780045-0846
Format: TEL
From: BAGHDAD
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978016/aaaaaecv.tel
Line Count: 120
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 599063e3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BAGHDAD 2162, 78 BAGHDAD 197, 78 BAGHDAD 195
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3768834
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IRAQI CHRISTIAN REFUGEES
TAGS: CVIS, SHUM, SREF, IZ, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/599063e3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014